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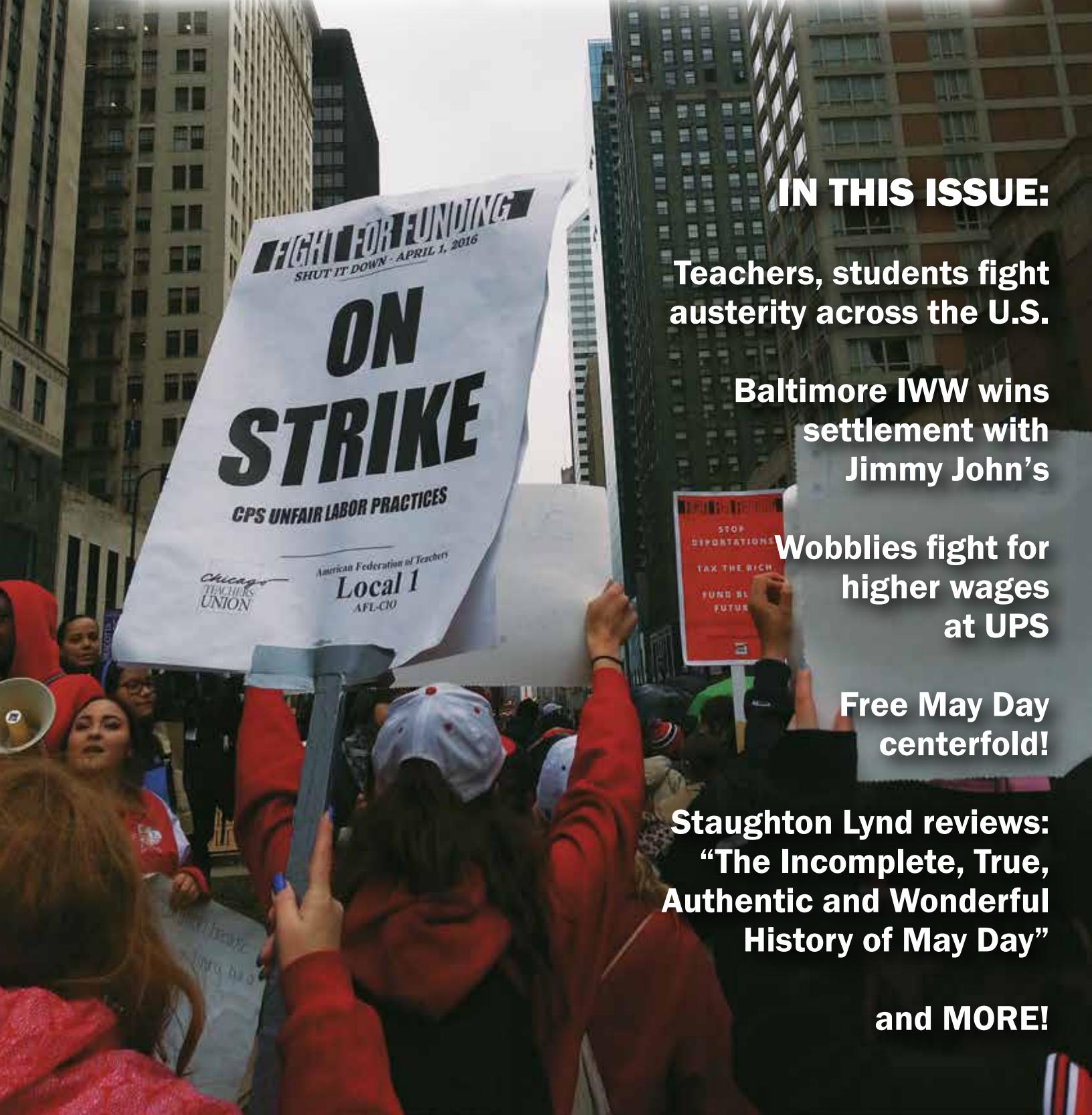
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Industrial Worker

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Teachers, students fight
austerity across the U.S.

Baltimore IWW wins
settlement with
Jimmy John's

Wobblies fight for
higher wages
at UPS

Free May Day
centerfold!

Staughton Lynd reviews:
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and MORE!

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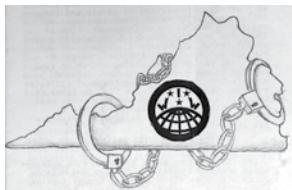
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Incarcerated workers join the IWW, form the Free Virginia Movement

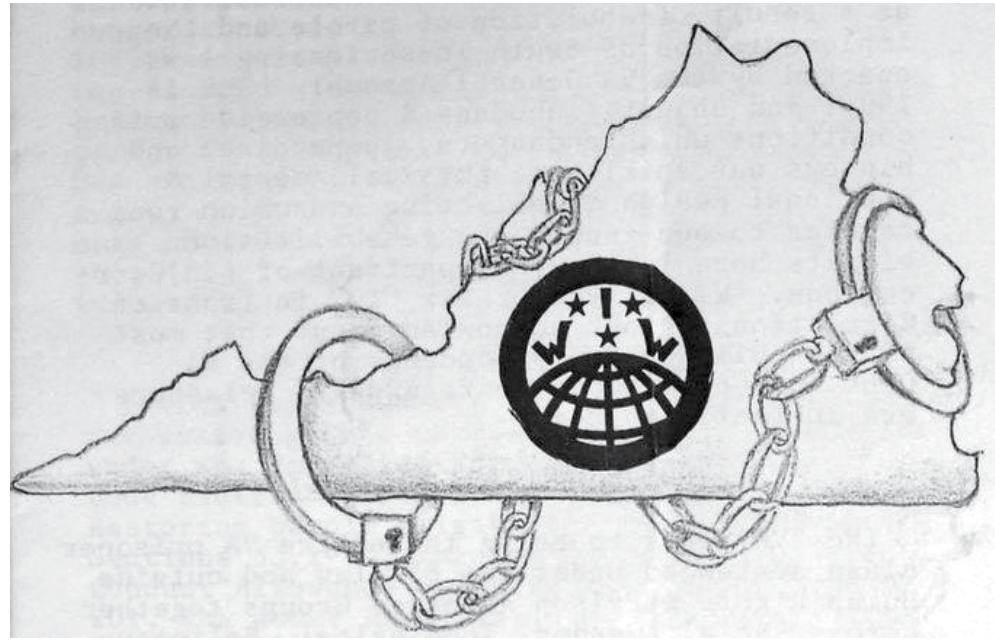
By the IWW Incarcerated Workers' Organizing Committee

Inmates of the Virginia Department of Corrections have called for an end to abusive conditions in a statement released in February 2016. Calling themselves the Free Virginia Movement, in solidarity with the Free Alabama Movement, the incarcerated workers within Virginia's prison system have joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in hopes to improve living and working conditions throughout Virginia's prisons and to repeal a series of state laws enacted in 1994 which effectively abolished parole.

The stated goals of the organization include an across-the-board reinstatement for eligibility of parole, the reinvestment of interests gained from inmates' funds into rehabilitation, job training, and education programs, and an exemption for those with life sentences from paying 10 percent of their wages into a post-release savings fund.

"At every stage of the struggle, we have petitioned the courts, filed grievances, and patiently waited for the VA state government to take corrective action," the Free Virginia Movement said in their statement, "But just like the institution of chattel slavery, mass incarceration is in essence an economic system which uses human beings as its nuts and bolts."

"These people live and work in some of the harshest conditions in the country," said Emma Rose, a member of the IWW's Incarcerated Workers' Organizing Committee (IWOC). "If anyone



The Free Virginia Movement.

needed to organize today, it's them," Rose added.

In 2014, the IWW won wage increases for Whole Foods workers in California, a company that has recently come under fire for their use of prison labor in sourcing their cheeses and fish.

Due to the recent efforts of the IWW's IWOC, approximately one in five members of the union, which welcomes workers in every industry, are currently incarcerated. "People are joining in droves," said a representative of IWOC. "A formal

network is growing out of the informal collaboration between the Free Alabama Movement and the IWW. It's really exciting to see people come together to organize in places where 70 cents an hour is considered good pay."

The union has welcomed incarcerated workers with open arms, according to Rose, who said labor may suffer if they leave prisoners behind.

"It goes back to the slogan of the labor movement, 'An injury to one is an injury to all.' These are people fighting to have modern job training and to get paid for the work they do so they aren't completely left behind when they get out. They're paid pennies for work while we're fighting to get \$15 an hour on the outside. [Donald] Trump is wrong about corporations finding cheap labor in China, they're doing it right under our noses and they're using prison labor to do it," Rose added.

For more information and to donate to the Free Virginia Movement, visit: <http://iwoc.noblogs.org/donate>.

Submit your nomination(s) to the Working Writers Contest!

Fellow Workers!

Now you can give recognition to the story, essay, cartoon, or song that has inspired you this year!

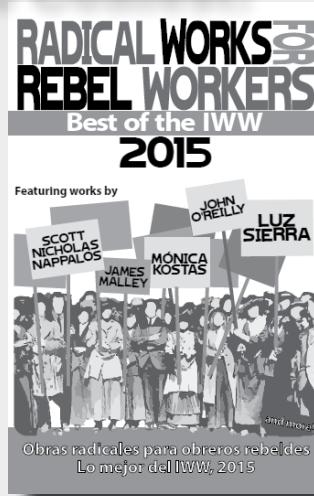
The IWW Literature Committee is seeking nominations for the second annual Working Writers Contest in the following categories: workplace writing, contemporary labor or economic analysis, agitational cartoons, or songs.

We are especially excited to recognize writing that was published in the *Industrial Worker* or *Solidaridad*, or for the blog of the Quebec IWW, between May 2015 and May 2016 (even if it was written by a non-member). Unpublished pieces can also be submitted, as long as they were written by members, during the same time period.

Please send nominations to workingwriterscontest@gmail.com before June 1, 2016. Recognition will be given at the 2016 General Convention, and winning pieces will be collected in a pamphlet.

Good luck!

P.S. The results of the 2015 Working Writers Contest are still available from GHQ as a pamphlet (pictured to the right). Make sure to order a bundle for your branch!



Correction

The article titled "Beware of Company Consciousness," which appeared on page 17 of the Winter 2016 issue of the *Industrial Worker*, mistakenly contained the wrong byline. This article was written by Chuck Martin, and not by x372712, as listed. The *Industrial Worker* apologizes for this error.

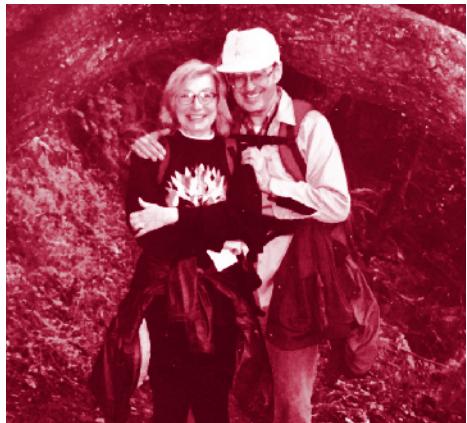
Rest in Peace, Fellow Worker Louis Prisco

By FW Sparrow

Fellow Worker (FW) Louis Prisco passed away in San Francisco on Dec. 17, 2015. FW Louis was a long-time member of the IWW. He joined the IWW in 1971 and remained a member for over 40 years. Louis was born in Providence, R.I. on Aug. 22, 1939.

Since his passing, I have had an opportunity to hear more about Louis during his time as a member of the Bay Area branch of the IWW. Long before I met Louis in the mid-1990s, he served as Bay Area Branch Secretary several times. Those were the days of FWs Dick and Pat Ellington, Phil Melman, Frank Devore and Faith Petric, to name a few prominent Wobblies of the time.

FW Louis worked for the San Francisco Department of Human Services where he was active in his other union, Service Employees International Union (SEIU). According to one Wobbly, FW Dirty Face, Louis had a healthy disrespect for union leadership and remained critical of union bureaucrats. Dirty Face tells the story of how Louis attended a meeting of SEIU and listened to union leaders denounce the bosses for one thing



FW Louis Prisco (right) with his wife.

Photo: theyodeler.org

or another, only to walk into a bar later to find the union leadership at a table with the boss.

FW Louis was quite determined. I worked with Louis in 2006-2007, reaching out to baristas at Starbucks and other coffee shops. Louis walked all over San Francisco handing out leaflets to Starbucks workers. He worried that the bosses might see the leaflet. He worked on perfecting his approach to make sure workers, not bosses, got the message to organize.

Another facet of Louis was his love of nature.

I am told Louis led hikes around San Francisco and the Bay Area. He was involved in stopping the destruction of rare species of plants on San Bruno Mountain in south San Francisco.

And of course Louis led popular walks on the waterfront, where the 1934 West Coast waterfront strike took place. He usually led his walks to coincide with Labor Fest.

I close by quoting a few FWs that knew FW Louis.

"I joined the IWW in November of 1969 and first met Louis Prisco when he lined up here with the OBU in 1971. He was no flash in the pan 'thirty-day wonder' but stuck with us to the end of his days." - FW Harry Saitonen

"When I joined in 1982 there weren't too many of us around. Louis was one of the FWs that kept the branch going." - FW Marc Janowitz.

"Here are notes, minutes and announcements from the Bay Area Branch of the 70s and 80s. Louis is mentioned frequently. You should take them and go through them." - FW Robert Rush.

Louis and I lined up in the OBU the same year, 1971.

More on racism and colonialism: George Orwell's perspective



Fellow Workers,

Apropos of Nolan Grunskas's article on page 10 of the Winter 2016 *Industrial Worker* (entitled "Black History Month: Remembering a long history of U.S.-led racist oppression"), I would like to look into George Orwell's perspective:

One of the most important things about George Orwell was that he was NOT Eurocentric. In fact, the exploitation of people in what we call the "third world" was more than a major concern of his. When you open "The Orwell Reader" and start reading "Killing an Elephant," you see in the first three paragraphs a denunciation of imperialism and Orwell's, then Eric Blair's (Eric Blair was his birth name, which was never legally changed), predicament of his working for the colonial system. "The Orwell Reader" was one of the very early posthumous collections of Orwell's work.

In his "As I Please" column of Jan. 26, 1945 in *Tribune*, Orwell mentioned his attendance, not as a supporter, but as an observer, of a rally of the League for European Freedom. The League for European Freedom was protesting Russian violation of liberty in Poland and Yugoslavia, but they

had nothing to say about Britain's continuing occupation of India, nor of the British imposed right-wing dictatorship in Greece, as Orwell noted. The former "Red Duchess" of Atholl was in attendance on that occasion.

In reply to a letter from the Duchess of Atholl, Orwell declined an invitation from her to speak at another rally for that League for similar reasons. This was in a Nov. 15, 1945 letter. In a Feb. 24, 1946 *Tribune* review of "The Story of Burma by F. Tennyson Jones," Orwell criticized the author for not understanding the nature of the bad British rule in Burma. He upheld his conviction in two letters to Jones when she wrote to him in protest against his review. In *Burmese Days*, "A Hanging," and "Shooting an Elephant" he bore witness to the cynical exploitation of Burma by Britain. In a 1939 article Orwell mentioned how all the talk of European democratic unity left out people of what we now call the "third world." He believed that European socialist prosperity was in fact dependent on exploitation of people and natural resources from underdeveloped areas of the world. It continues through neo-colonialism. During World War II, he was

a staunch advocate for independence, or at least Dominion status, for India, as was and is enjoyed by Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Orwell had commented about the seeming invisibility of dark-skinned people east of the Suez Canal and south of the Mediterranean, to white Europeans, especially to tourists. They seemed to blend into the scenery. It makes it easier not to notice their being exploited, and their poverty. Orwell fought against this invisibility, in the books and essays mentioned above, and in other writings.

Two manifestations of what Grunskas discussed in his article were:

(1) U.S. policy during the Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Biafran War, which lasted from 1967 to 1970. The United States strongly backed British military support of Nigeria during the Biafran War. Millions were killed. This policy was dictated by the Shell-Mex and BP Ltd oil company

(2) The Pakistan-Bangladeshi 1971 war, in which the United States armed Pakistan and millions were killed

In solidarity,
Raymond S. Solomon

PORTLAND TENANTS UNITED ORGANIZES AGAINST EVICTION AND DISPLACEMENT

By Shane Burley

"There's no such thing as 'no-cause' when it comes to a no-cause eviction," said Rosalie Nowak, a Portland renter telling a crowd of hundreds about being evicted only a month after moving in. "There's always a cause. A reason. It's that you, as a renter, have no right to know what the hell is going on. In that case, we as tenants have less rights than someone who is taken to jail. At least they are entitled to know what they are being held for."

During the weekend before Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday—Jan. 16-17, 2016—cities around the country built on Dr. King's legacy for racial and economic justice. For renters in Portland, Ore., this meant driving at part of social life that has become scarcely sustainable in recent years: housing. In Portland, like in many other "hip" urban areas like San Francisco's Mission District or Brooklyn in New York, the cost of living has skyrocketed as tech and creative class jobs move in and developers force old communities out. This has caused what local housing non-profit, the Community Alliance of Tenants, has labeled a "Renter S.O.S." With a recent Zillow study putting the average monthly cost of a two-bedroom apartment at over \$1,500, residents would need to make more than \$16 per hour for the city to be affordable, according to United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines. Meanwhile the minimum wage remains at only \$9.25 per hour.

This rental crisis, which has reshaped many urban enclaves through gentrification, has been one of the sparks that has caused a near uprising among the city's most targeted communities. In Portland, the recent Renters Assemblies, which brought together community organizations and tenants to tell stories of hardship and displacement, gave way to a new call for citywide unionization. That gave birth to Portland Tenants United (PTU), a new project that organized this rally along with organizations like Don't Shoot PDX, the VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project, and the homeless empowerment project, Right to Dream Too. Looking at how discrimination and retaliation both victimize the most oppressed populations in the city and rob renters of their voice, a rally and march on MLK weekend brought together hundreds of people from unions and coalitions from around the city.

Speakers brought together disparate issues, from the crippling effects of racial and heteronormative discrimination, to the lived experiences of seniors and people on fixed incomes trying to make

ends meet when their rent is suddenly doubled.

"If we keep paying it, they'll keep charging it," declared Maril Alyn-Claire with a strength that empowered those around her. Maril has been living on disability for over 20 years after a traumatic brain injury, and she recently caught wind that her rent was going to increase by almost 50 percent. This will put it above what her Section 8 vouchers are able to pay. With very little left over after bills every month, she will be unable to pay the difference. The quest to find another place could leave her homeless before finding something affordable. Recently the housing authority, Home Forward, opened up for applications for new affordable units in the city. They were bogged with 21,000 applications in only 10 days, which meant that they had to lottery out 3,000 and leave the remaining 18,000 to the market.

The solution that PTU is proposing, which is inspired by movements from around the country like Buffalo Tenants United and the San Francisco Tenants Union, is to create a campaign that puts the power back in the tenants' hands. Just as workers can have a union in their workplaces, tenants should have the same power of collective action and bargaining in their homes.

"Direct action gets the goods," said JC Sinn, organizer with the Portland IWW who drew the connection between directly confronting bosses in workplaces and directly halting evictions in apartment complexes. "While we may stand here right now on the steps of City Hall, the people who really have the power to end this housing crisis, to stop the profiteering landlords, the skyrocketing rents, the no-cause evictions... They're not in that building. They're not in Salem. They're not in Washington, D.C. They're right here."

Direct action has been the foundational principle of this erupting tenant movement, which can build on many of the lessons of the early labor movement while not being beholden to many of the organizational structures that unions have to work with today. This was the foundation of PTU's victory only a week before, where they confronted the pending eviction of a disabled 73-year-old tenant who was being evicted from his apartment of over 30 years. As PTU organizer Margot Black said in press statements at the time, "It shouldn't take this sort of all-volunteer effort to keep a 73-year-old man in his home who should never have gotten a no-cause eviction in the first place."

PTU organized a rally to confront the landlord only days after hearing about the situation, and just



Portland Tenants United rally on the weekend of Jan. 16-17, 2016.

Photo: Daniel Vincent

the pressure of the impending community action got the landlord to permanently cancel the eviction. The attorneys involved had literally never seen this kind of reversal happen before, yet it is exactly this type of community power that will serve the foundation of PTU and other community tenant organizations.

After the rally, protesters overwhelmed Portland's business district, taking over the streets and delivering "letters of protest" to prominent property management companies and the county courthouse. These letters, modeled on Martin Luther's "The 95 Theses," were taped to each location, declaring that the community had found them in violation of renters' rights for exorbitant rent hikes, the displacement of communities of color, and for robbing tenants of their voice. Through the flurry of cameras, Austin Rose of PTU read the final clause of this housing thesis with a boom that could be heard by onlookers inside. "If you fail to remedy these violations of our dignity and security immediately, we will take further action to ensure an eviction and discrimination-free 2016!"

PTU will remain committed by coordinating more between cities in similar circumstances and also keeping renters in the driver's seat at all levels. As one of the founding members of PTU, Rosalie Nowak is committed to staying involved.

"It's the tenant who bears all the burden of an unexpected move," said Rosalie regarding the endemic of no-cause evictions sweeping Portland.

"No-cause eviction is a form of bullying that is sanctioned by the state of Oregon. It's hard to fight back against a bully. It's expensive. It's time consuming. People lose heart. People leave town. It's usually a losing proposition, unless we, as tenants, stand together. We have each other," she added.

JIMMY JOHN'S SETTLES WITH BALTIMORE WOBBLIES OVER ILLEGAL FIRING

By Matthias Lalisse

Thanks to efforts of the Baltimore branch of the IWW, sandwich franchiser Jimmy John's, which has been locked in a years-long struggle with its IWW-backed workers, settled with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to offer compensation to a former worker and some protection for those still working at the franchise. The agreement, which was signed by the Baltimore IWW and Jimmy John's on Feb. 29, 2016, also includes numerous concessions to IWW organizers at the affected branches.

Former Jimmy John's worker James Hegler was fired in September 2014 in an attempt by management to intimidate workers who, at that time, were starting to organize under the IWW. Although Jimmy John's does not officially admit guilt in the settlement, organizers maintain that James's firing occurred as part of an illegal attempt by management to intimidate workers at the branch from considering unionization. Under the NLRB settlement, James was awarded over \$7,500 in front and back pay, and Jimmy John's is now forced to notify workers of their rights through a public notice and private mailings to all workers at the affected locations in Baltimore.

Although the Baltimore IWW has been active at Jimmy John's for years, the campaign officially went public in early August 2014, heralded by a flurry of protests that gained considerable media attention. Among other demands, Jimmy John's workers in Baltimore have agitated for paid sick leave, time-and-a-half pay for drivers facing dangerous weather conditions, a harassment-free workplace, and higher wages—in particular, wage parity with workers in the Hilton Hotel adjoining the Pratt Street location, who make some \$5 more per hour than those at Jimmy John's.

Since 2010, the IWW has campaigned across the United States, challenging numerous abuses suffered by workers at Jimmy John's. The national campaign, spawned in Minneapolis in 2010, aimed first to establish the workers' right to form a union at Jimmy John's—a right in statute, though not generally in fact. Six Minneapolis workers had this last fact bitterly drilled in after being fired in 2011 and eventually reinstated by an NLRB ruling—three years later. Over in Baltimore, days after the campaign went public, management reacted in typical fashion—a retaliation that was part petty tantrum, part collective punishment—issuing an unprecedented string of “uniform violations” against nearly every worker at the Pratt



Jimmy John's workers advocate for paid sick leave in Baltimore, November 2014.

Street location. Eventually, Jimmy John's set about purging its workforce of those who were involved in the organizing drive.

The recent NLRB judgement goes some way to enshrining Jimmy John's workers' right to organize, requiring Jimmy John's to post a statement on the official board notice form affirming the right of workers to form, join, or assist a union, and guaranteeing no surveillance or retaliation for union-related activity—both of which have been problems at the Baltimore locations. These gestures may weaken a persistent barrier to workers' efforts at Jimmy John's—the franchise's openly anti-union stance, which leads many workers to fear unemployment or harsher work conditions if they express support for the union.

In addition, it offers concessions specific to the IWW, mentioning in particular that workers will not be targeted for any affiliation with the Baltimore branch of the IWW. Jimmy John's agrees not to interrogate workers about the IWW, or to prevent them from discussing the union or wearing IWW buttons or pins, along with a slew of similar guarantees. Records of “disciplinary” actions taken against several workers involved in organizing will also be expunged from Jimmy John's records.

Although the settlement is a victory for the IWW, the cycle of fire-and-forget is nothing new in the fight with Jimmy John's. The six Minneapolis workers fired in 2011, who waited until 2014 for the reinstatement to be mandated after a variety of appeals, illustrate the dim prospects for exclusively legal solutions to employer abuses. However, their firing, like the firing of James

Hegler, led to an outpouring of direct action on their behalf by fellow IWW members. Minneapolis workers conducted an ingenious poster campaign alerting Jimmy John's customers to the health hazards of denying workers sick leave.

This poster campaign is one of a number of iconic actions that Jimmy John's Wobblies have used to communicate with an American public largely disaffected from the labor movement. The “sick worker making your sandwich” motif has taken off, and was used in demonstrations in Baltimore to drive home the need for proper sick leave. Picketing in August 2014, Baltimore Jimmy John's workers distributed hundreds of disposable “tip cups” marked “iww.org,” protesting the franchise's ban on tip collections even given their workers' low wages. Several times, workers confronted the Baltimore franchise's owner, Mike Gillette, maintaining pressure while expressing their grievances, quite effectively, to customers and passers-by. To the brand-obsessed Jimmy John's, it was a perfect storm.

Although Jimmy John's did not officially admit guilt in the case, their decision to settle with James Hegler reflects their fear of going to court over the firing. But former Jimmy John's worker and IWW organizer Isaac Dalto emphasized that the fight with Jimmy John's is far from over: “Justice delayed is justice denied. Waiting 18 months for this decision is unacceptable, and this outcome is proof of why we as working people need to stick together and fight for our rights via direct action and solidarity.” He added that the IWW would be organizing at Jimmy John's for years to come.

Fighting for \$15 at UPS: Lessons from a daunting campaign

By FW Coeur de Bord

In January 2015, the Package Handler's Organizing Committee (PHOC) voted to begin a campaign demanding the starting wage at the three United Parcel Service (UPS) hubs in the Twin Cities be raised to \$15 per hour (up from \$10), and a corresponding \$5-per-hour raise for all hub employees. We had our sights set on building power towards some form of disruptive action during 2015's peak season. Now that the peak season has come and gone, I would like to share some of my feelings on the progression, evolution, and execution of this campaign, as well as some ways it has influenced our organizing in general at UPS in Minneapolis.

I feel this document is useful as part of a future retrospective assessment of the "Boxmart" campaign (the early code name for our campaign that's still used by branch members and others to refer to the ongoing organizing project at UPS) and the PHOC committee itself. However, I hope it can also serve as a useful reference for other IWW organizing committees thinking about taking on labor-intensive, medium- to long-term campaigns such as this. Whether or not such a campaign would have a positive impact on your organizing is a decision that only your committee can make, but I hope that by offering my perspectives other Wobblies will be able to make a more informed decision.

The Motion

The original motion we drafted laid out a basic framework for the campaign while leaving plenty of room for smaller aspects of the campaign to develop on their own. We aimed at having a series of escalating mass actions at one or more of the sorting hubs, which would culminate with a disruptive action targeting UPS's profits on their busiest day of the year. The motion included specific guidelines for gathering contacts, recruitment, development, follow-through, and retention to provide organizers with a track to follow while building the campaign. We would start with a petition, which we would use to invite supporters to meetings or set up one-on-ones (individual meetings). The rest of the campaign would develop out of those meetings.

Observations

We got off track from the original motion early on. The first round of petitioning went rather well, as we gathered over 200 signatures from the

Minneapolis and Maple Grove hubs. Within a short period of time, we had collected the contact information from these petitions into a shared document and called through the whole list. We planned the first mass meeting for early March 2015. We had about a dozen people who said they would attend, and then nobody showed up. We tried again, with the same results. We then shifted our focus to setting up one-on-ones with contacts. This had more success, but we failed to reach the number of signatories we had hoped for.

Being off track early on meant that the committee did not grow to the level we needed to continue escalating as planned. A small committee decreased our ability to hold actions around smaller grievances. Our influence did not spread to other areas of the buildings. Looking back, these should have been early signs that our strategy needed to be revised.

But we did gather a lot of contacts.

We did an okay job of generating conversation and some level of "hype" around the demand through several symbolic actions. We had petitions out with every issue of our newsletter, *Screw Ups*, which added new contacts to our document. We called each person who signed the petition to set up one-on-ones or invite them to committee meetings. In September, we handed out stickers along with *Screw Ups* that read "I Support a \$15/hour Starting Wage and a \$5 raise for current employees. It's Time!!" Lots of people wore them around work that day, and many stickers ended up on walls, equipment, and other surfaces around the hub. In November, we stood outside the hub at the end of twilight and midnight shifts one night with posters containing the same text as the stickers. We took pictures of people holding the signs, which were then posted to the Facebook page.

But hype is not organization. Many people who have been "touched" by this campaign don't get anywhere beyond signing the petition. Unsurprisingly, it has been the people with whom organizers have a longer, more in-depth relationship with, who come to meetings and participate in the campaign in a larger way. Those relationships have been built through several pathways, but the common thread is the one-on-one.

Agitation has not often been an issue when organizing our co-workers. I think we have had the greatest difficulty with educating and



UPS workers in November 2015, building visibility for the campaign for \$15 per hour.

Photo: PHOC

inoculating. Because agitation levels are so high already, those are generally the first areas that we cover when meeting with co-workers. They are also very difficult topics to cover in passing while at work. If you can't get past the education and the inoculation, how are you ever going to build long-term organization? One-on-ones become even more crucial in this equation. Repeated one-on-ones. The most consistent participation we have had has been the result of a series of out-of-work interactions and a persistent effort to work through issues that may be holding someone back from organizing.

Thoughts

One thing I think we failed to do is allow the campaign to evolve as the size and capacity of the organizing committee changed. Early on in 2015, we were riding a high of momentum and had a relatively large committee that peaked at six members in good standing organizing at two local hubs. At that point, we were optimistic about our capability to organize a broad swath

of hub workers and pull off a large-scale action during peak season. At the same time, we were falling behind on doing one-on-ones, which have always been high on our list of effective organizing tools. I think we relied too heavily on workplace contact and conversation, as well as agitational tools such as *Screw Ups*. Later in the summer and fall of 2015, our committee lost half of its in-shop organizers, and didn't keep them on as outside organizers. The reduced committee stayed the course without taking time to analyze our capacity. We realized too late that we hadn't conducted enough one-on-ones or developed our co-workers to the point where we could ask them to step up to keep us on track.

There have been several moments over the course of the campaign in which we have had an influx of momentum. These have been moments when our co-workers—with whom we have strong relationships (both at and outside of work)—have attended our meetings and contributed their ideas on the campaign and other grievances. The lesson here is simple: we need to be consistent about agitating, educating and organizing our co-workers. It is really hard to generate momentum when weekly meetings consist of the same people, talking about the same things, coming up with the same tasks. Also, it is easier to get less-organized co-workers to meetings if their friends and/or trusted co-workers are attending.

Impacts to Organizing

When the aforementioned motion was first presented at the PHOC meeting on Jan. 16, 2015, I had reservations about a few aspects of it. My major sticking point centered on my concern about taking on a campaign of this scale with a committee that was both relatively small (less than 1 percent of the part-timers at the Minneapolis hub alone), and relatively young (half the committee had worked at UPS for three months or less). Could we manage the pressure of building for such a monumental demand in a relatively short timeframe without losing sight of the smaller issues that have been galvanizing moments in our previous organizing? Would anybody take us seriously? Could we decide to change course in six months without losing all our support, or feeling like our time had been completely wasted?

I ended up voting in favor of the motion. I am glad I did. That being said, I have wavered back and forth over the course of this campaign on whether it was having a positive or negative effect on organizing in general at UPS. Some of that is due to the aforementioned peaks and valleys of momentum. The following is some analysis of my initial reservations that I think accounted for the rest of my mixed feelings:

1. Could we manage the pressure of building for such a monumental demand in a relatively short timeframe without losing sight of the smaller issues that have been galvanizing moments in our previous organizing? For the most part, I think we maintained the ability to take on smaller fights. We even got better at addressing small grievances in a way, as our social network got larger and we began gaining the respect and trust of our co-workers. I believe we learned about more workers' grievances and that more people came to know us as people to approach when they had an issue with conditions at work.

On the other hand, conducting this campaign has been incredibly labor-intensive. Even when we have fallen behind on tasks, burnout has always been lurking in the shadows. *Screw Ups* was published less frequently this year than it was last year. And though I hope this is not true, I wonder if the chronic stress associated with a few organizers (most of whom were working two to three jobs throughout the year) working on a massive campaign in a large workplace stopped us from taking on smaller fights. This could have come in the form of blatant rejection, or in the failure to recognize an issue/opportunity when it presented itself.



Photo: PHOC

2. Would anybody take us seriously? Yes. Not everybody, but I don't think we were ever that naive. Working a unionized manual labor job that pays less than comparable non-union work across the city means that people listen when the topic of a pay raise comes up. For newer workers (let's say within the last five years/since the last contract), our part-time wages are almost never enough to live on. For those who have been around the company longer, they have seen their wages remain stagnant since Ronald Reagan was president. Stagnant wages are one of the rank-and-file's biggest issues with the Teamsters. So in that sense, wages were a great issue to take on for a dual/solidarity union campaign.

But of course there were those who dismissed us. Many of these reactions were based on people's (begrudging) allegiance to the Teamsters. "That's

not in the contract," and "Not unless the Teamsters support it," were typical responses we heard from people who did not support our petitioning and other efforts. A successful antidote to these sentiments was a good old fashioned one-on-one. Being able to sit down with someone, explain the role of the Teamsters in our shop, and why we were raising this demand as rank-and-file workers, was often enough to at least garner support.

3. Could we decide to change course in six months without losing all our support, or feeling like our time had been completely wasted? This is a tough question to answer, as it is completely hypothetical. However, I still think it has some value as a way to evaluate a large campaign. Things don't always go as planned, and it is useful to have a backup plan that can help salvage the gains you have made and begin to move forward in another direction.

Conclusions

Undertaking this campaign has taught me many important and lasting lessons as a union organizer. Many of these lessons I would not have learned had we continued along our existing path. I learned the importance of a democratically-functioning committee with a diversity of opinions and perspectives. Accountability among committee members must be established early on and maintained throughout even the most difficult moments of a campaign. I quickly realized that I could not be an effective organizer by only talking with people I knew already. Organizing is not a comfortable, social affair; at times, it feels like what my co-committee member describes as "a war zone." And as long as you understand and are prepared for that, you can make impressive gains in the struggle against the wage system.

But this campaign has been more than just a learning experience. Despite some lingering moments of disappointment and nagging doubts, I am convinced that this campaign has had an incredibly positive impact on our organizing at UPS. We have identified and developed a crew of shop-floor militants, and brought a few of them into the IWW. We are tapped into social networks across our shop. These networks cross the boundaries of age, race and gender. We have learned to back off and play defense when conditions require it. Through all of the stress, joy, disappointment, and abundant humor, we have stayed together and even grown as a committee. While the \$15-per-hour starting wage campaign itself may not be successful, I believe that we have shown that the idea of taking on a major, public campaign contributes to greater overall success in organizing our fellow workers.

CONDEMNED FOR LIFE FOR SELF-DEFENSE

By The FreeSpook Movement

Michael "Esé Spook" Armendariz was incarcerated in 2002 in the state of New Mexico for the "crime" of self-defense. The State tampered with and excluded evidence, incarcerated and intimidated eyewitnesses, and saddled Michael with an incompetent public defender. A farcical trial concluded with Michael sentenced to life plus 13 years; a 43-year prison sentence for defending his life and the lives of his friends. The FreeSpook Movement is working with Michael and his family to fight for his freedom. The following is Michael's statement regarding the incident. Learn more at <http://freespook.com>.

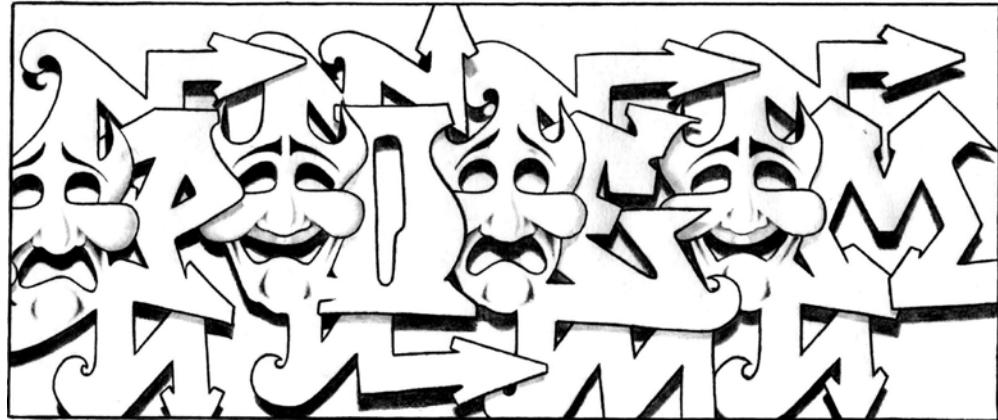
Try to put yourself in my shoes.

You're out with some close friends on something like a double date. One of the ladies you're with gets harassed on the dance floor by some drunk, angry gang members. Your best friend (since day one) doesn't react calmly to this disrespect. He gets protective and fights.

Because your friend stuck up for the homegirl, he gets jumped and beat within an inch of his life by many people. Outnumbered, you're trying to stop this fight and get away. The situation is escalating and you're the only person who can stop this in time. Your friend is being strangled and his legs have stopped kicking, his life is in very real danger. You're handed a gun so with the only effective means available, you subdue the crowd and stop the fight.

You haven't fired a shot but now you have a gun. It's not yours so you don't even know if it's loaded. To make matters more complicated, now you are the target. You tell them to back up so you can leave but they won't. It's obvious they're not in their right minds. You're attacked and in a moment of self-preservation, you react and fire on your attacker. You had given them every chance to back up and let you leave. You didn't ask for this situation.

The drama unfolds and now a man is dead. This may be the worst feeling you've ever had. You're coping with that stress while being hunted like a wild beast and you shouldn't have run but you are overwhelmed. Homes of your family members, friends, and every home you're associated with is broken into and vandalized. Your people are intimidated. Some are beaten, others kidnapped and held against their will. Your kids grow up to have posttraumatic stress disorder



"Preventing Oppression Ends Misery (POEM)."

Graphic: Michael "Esé Spook"

(PTSD) over the ordeal. You know that although someone's death is nothing to take lightly, had you let your friend be murdered, you wouldn't have taken that lightly at all.

This gang has powerful connections. After your arrest, they use the media to confuse issues and rewrite the story. You're turned into a pariah while the gang members are glorified. Witnesses are threatened to either suppress or change their testimonies. A kangaroo court is held for the appearance of propriety. Your own public defender destroys your case while the prosecution helps and illegally tampers with evidence. This isn't so much against you but you're a casualty in this cover up. You're sentenced to life in prison for premeditated first-degree murder.

There's a stigma around the gang member label which I hate to reinforce. But by now I imagine you've guessed which "gang" I'm talking about. To clarify, I believe there are law enforcement people who would advocate for truth, justice, and fair play. I'm not generalizing, I'm comparing a few specific people and their accomplices (about 10 in my case) to the stereotype I had to contend with. Prior to that terrible moment I had grown up and conquered the negative impulses I had as a young man (before my 20s I had made plenty of mistakes). I didn't make a mistake on the night I'm infamous for but my character became the issue. Who works together to commit a crime, cleans up after each other, and has each other's back right or wrong? That label shouldn't only cut one way because it makes a person's humanity easy to dismiss, also their right to defend it.

The stigma around first-degree murder is

another uphill battle. When activists advocate for the wrongfully convicted, they're usually standing against cases of mistaken identity or they're standing for well-known political prisoners. I just had a really bad night when my friend and I were attacked by a group of drunk, fight-trained people who weren't in their right minds. I gather now that we had been recognized as "gangsters" and ex-felons which (I guess) justified the sexual harassment of one of the girls with us. Whatever the cause, I was forced into a situation where I had to defend my friend's life. There are certainly more deserving causes than mine, however, my actions were not those of a criminal or vigilante and there's no way I deserve to be labeled a murderer.

I still often ask myself if I sound like I'm complaining or trying to get sympathy. My heart says I'm not. I'm speaking truth to power and fighting for my freedom. I've read a lot of law books and my circumstances didn't call for a murder conviction. This is an attempt to get a new lawyer and a fair trial through a process called habeas corpus. I have a lot of love for people so I think people will have love for me.

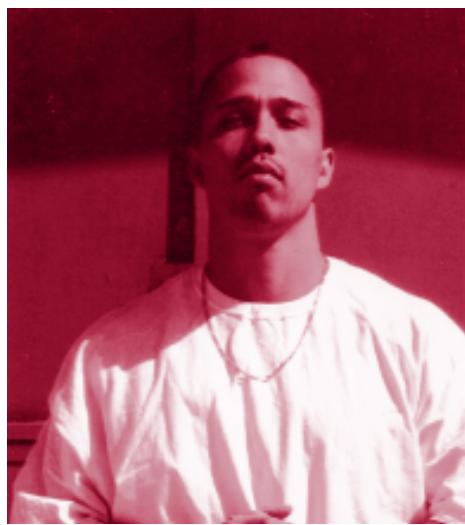
The following are Michael's mother's thoughts:

All my life I have been fighting for causes, whether it was civil rights, the environment, peace, children, or animals. Several decades ago, I began to get involved with the "justice" system after seeing how justice in this country was carried out. At the time, I had several friends who were sent to prison over minor drug offences and it became really clear to me that although the laws in this country may look good on paper, the way they

are carried out is a very different matter. It doesn't matter whether you are guilty or innocent or even if your offense was a danger to public safety; what matters in this country is whether you have money or not.

Back then, I knew a lot of people who were involved in the drug culture, and the ones who went to prison were the ones who didn't have the money for a good lawyer. The friends who could afford the best lawyers didn't have to go to prison—those who didn't have money didn't have a chance. A couple that I knew were arrested with three ounces of cocaine but didn't serve any time (interestingly, when they went to trial, the arresting officer said that they only had one ounce, which brings up a whole other argument of police corruption, but I digress). Another friend, who happened to be black, was arrested a couple of years later with two grams of coke and spent almost five years in prison. The difference? My friends who had ounces of coke were white and had rich parents, the friend who had grams wasn't white and didn't have rich parents.

This was about the time that the Penitentiary of New Mexico Prison Riot in Santa Fe occurred in 1980. After this horrific riot, I started becoming more interested in prison reform and the justice system. Little did I know that it would one day become very personal. You see, I'm a single



Michael "Esé Spook" Armendariz.

mother with one child. My son became involved in a gang. Since I had to work full time to keep a roof over our heads and food in our stomachs, he was often unsupervised after about the age of 11. It was an economic necessity. I was sick of only making minimum wage and decided to go back to school and complete my degree. Economically things got better, but I was away from home a lot since I was now going to school full time and working almost full time. When he joined a gang, I lost control and could never get it back.

Fourteen years ago, my son was arrested for

murder. Even though my son had turned his life around at that time, his past and my economic situation worked against us. He and his best friend were brutally attacked in a parking lot by a group of drunk men. They had to fight for their lives and in the process, a man died. Only later did we find out that the group of men who attacked them were all law enforcement officers. They were in plain clothes and were off duty and my son and his friend had never seen them before. There was no way that they could know who these people were since they didn't identify themselves, instead only asking, "Do you know who you're fucking with?" They certainly weren't acting like people who are there to serve and protect since six or more of them had just brutally attacked my son and his friend, unprovoked. In the process, a man died. It turned out that he was a deputy sheriff. My son was sentenced to 43 years for his "murder." This was a clear cut case of self-defense and defense of another, but instead he was convicted of first-degree murder.

I have been fighting for the last 14 years to try to get this unjust conviction overturned.

For a detailed description of the incident, go to <http://freespook.com/incident>, which is part of Michael's essay, "Somebody's Lil' Homie," which delves into his life, politics and philosophies. You can support Michael by donating to his legal fund at <http://freespook.com/support>.

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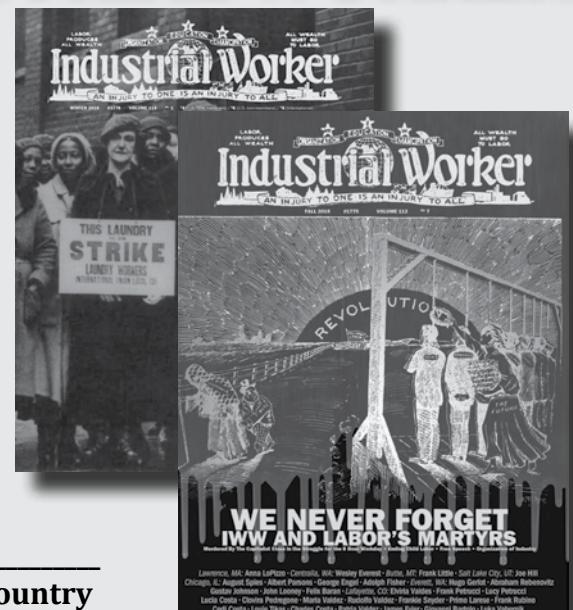
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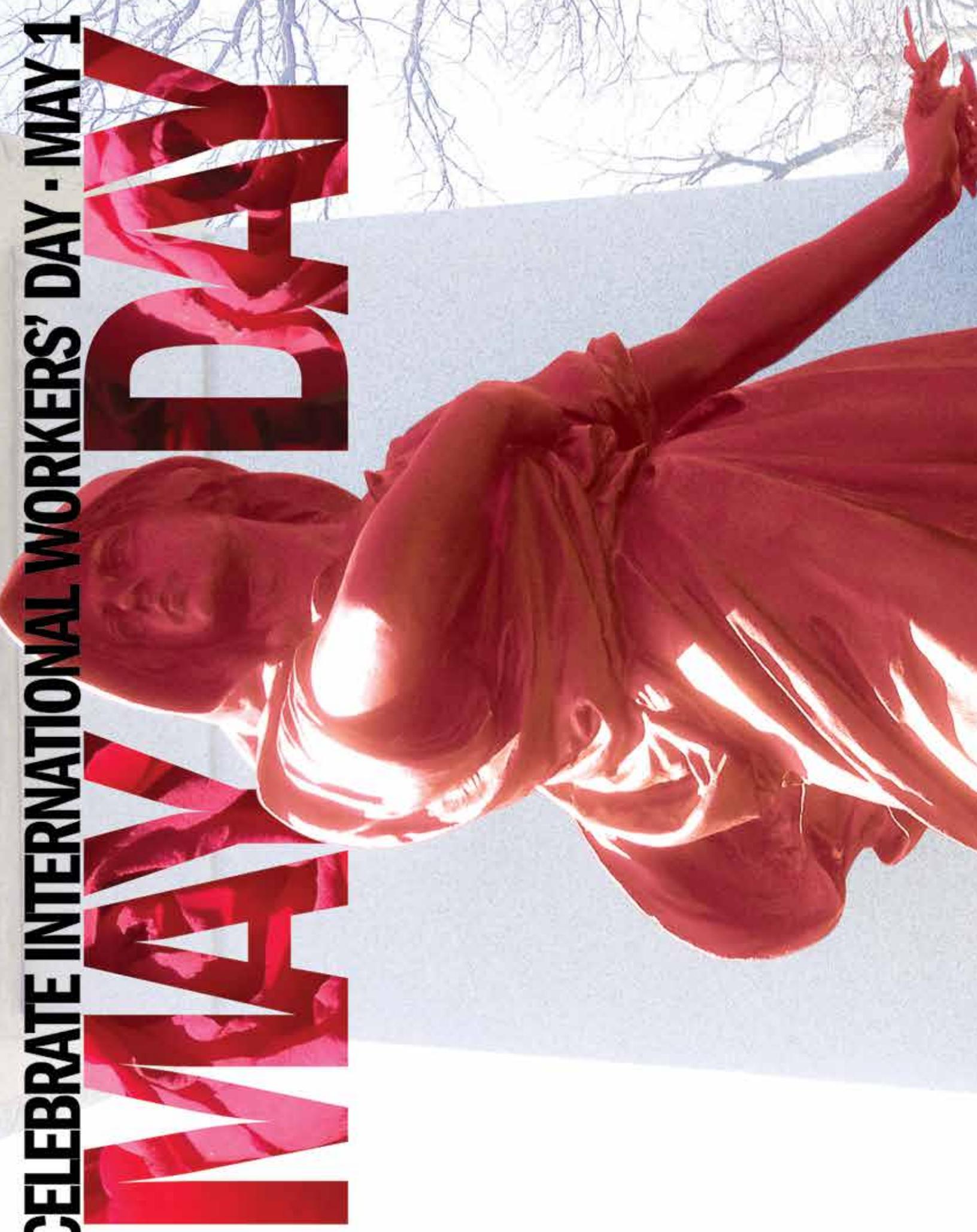
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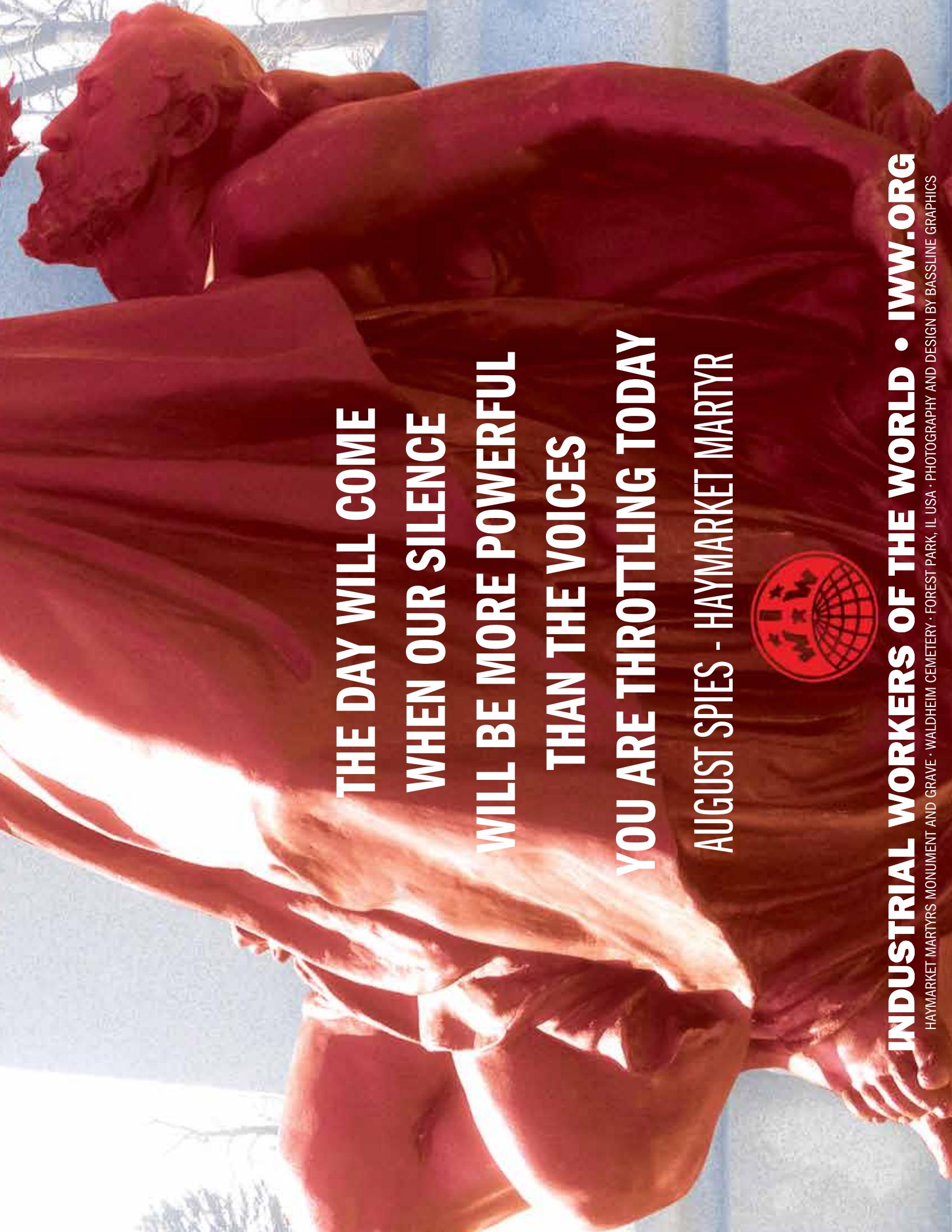
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Joe Hill 100 Road Show Tour holds concerts in three dozen cities

By Ron Kaminkow

On Nov. 19, 1915, a poor Swedish immigrant was executed by firing squad in Salt Lake City, Utah. While his legal assassination was protested worldwide and his name was briefly a household word 100 years ago, today most people have never heard the name of this migrant worker, hobo, union organizer, song writer, satirist and agitator. But throughout the course of 2015—100 years after his execution—dozens of concerts, plays, singalongs and other gatherings were conducted across the United States in remembrance of this man “who never died”: Joe Hill.

The Joe Hill Road Show 100 Tour was an ambitious effort to bring the words, music and ideas of Joe Hill to the people. In some three dozen performances around the country—starting in Chicago on May 1 (International Workers’ Day) and ending in Salt Lake City on the anniversary of the day after his execution—crowds were treated to renditions of Joe’s songs as performed by a series of different musicians. While some of the crowds were small and others large, all shows on the tour were spirited events with lots of audience participation, enthusiasm, and laughter, all infused with the spirit of labor solidarity.

Performers at the various shows included a number of professional travelling musicians, others regionally-based, as well as local talent, invited up on stage to join in the fun. Some of the musicians included: Anne Feeney, Mark Ross, Bucky Halker, George Mann, J.P. Wright, Marc Revson (Lil’ Rev), Tim Gorenston, Patrick Dodd, David Rovics, Duncan Phillips, Otis Gibbs, Charlie King, Greg Artzner & Terry Leonino of “Magpie,” Jan Hammarlund and Chris Chandler. Joining them in at least three cities, the Labor Chorus in each added another dimension, a unique element to these shows, one that encouraged group singing. They performed in union halls, taverns, community centers, concert halls, churches, and even in an old wooden boxcar by the railroad tracks in Northern California. Shows took place in 18 states.

So why all the fuss over an itinerant immigrant shot to death 100 years ago? If Joe had been a loner, just another one of millions of isolated and destitute workingmen around the turn of the 20th century, he would have certainly died in obscurity. But Joe Hill (born Joel Emmanuel Hägglund) quickly assimilated to his new environment in the United States, refused to be treated unfairly,



Musicians play a song by Joe Hill in Reno, Nev., on Nov. 9, 2015. From left to right the performers are: George Mann, Tim Gorenston, David Fenimore, David Rovics and Chris Chandler.

joined the union that at that time was organizing unskilled transient workers (the Industrial Workers of the World) and found his voice. And what a voice that turned out to be! Joe composed hundreds of songs, never asked a penny for his services, and donated all of his works—songs, poems, cartoons—to the workers of the world to use as they saw fit to fight the class struggle. Workers from San Diego up to Maine in every mine and mill were soon singing Joe’s songs at work, on the picket line, on the street corners, on the soap box and in the jails. Yes, wherever workers would strike and organize was where you would hear the songs of Joe Hill.

Joe had been assigned by the IWW to assist in the organizing of copper miners and mill workers in Utah in the winter of 1914, when he was picked up by the police on a murder charge. Facing a hostile and conservative judge and the lack of an impartial jury, despite the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence and the existence of suspects far more likely to have motive for the murder and the contradictory testimony of witnesses, Joe was convicted of a crime he did not commit and was sentenced to death. Countless celebrities, dignitaries and high-level politicians pled for his clemency, but to no avail. Joe was shot at dawn on Nov. 19, 1915. A dedicated agitator to the bitter end, on his last night in prison Joe would wire Bill Haywood, General Secretary-Treasurer of the union, the immortal words: “Don’t waste time mourning, organize!” And ever the humorist, despite his pending demise, Joe would write, “It’s a hundred miles from here to Wyoming. Could

you arrange for my body to be hauled to the state line to be buried? Don’t want to be found dead in Utah.” As such, his body was transported to the union’s headquarters in Chicago, where a funeral procession of 30,000 workers would parade through downtown in one of the largest funeral processions the city had ever seen. Joe’s ashes, per his “last and final” will, would be parceled out by the union and mailed to workers all over the world to be scattered to the four winds.

While the Joe Hill 100 Road Show concerts included labor standards like “Solidarity Forever” and “Dump the Bosses Off Your Back,” the core of each show focused on Joe’s work, among them: “Casey Jones the Union Scab,” “The Preacher and the Slave (Pie in the Sky),” “Mr. Block” and “There is Power in a Union.” In addition, some shows featured the labor music of modern-day artists, a short play, a poetry recitation, or even a brass marching band. At many shows, song sheets were distributed to the audience to facilitate their participation. Each show was unique and had its own mood and vibe. But what they all shared was a celebration—not just of Joe Hill’s life and work—but of his ideas and his creed: international working-class solidarity, universal brotherhood, hope, struggle, revolution and the “One Big Union.”

To learn more about the life, work and music of Joe Hill, please see the website <http://www.joehill100.com>, a boundless resource complete with a history, bibliography, available merchandise, a listing of centenary events, words to many of Joe’s songs, photos, videos, and more.

Spike Lee's "Chi-Raq": a commodification of street life in Chicago

Lee, Spike. Chi-Raq. 40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks, 2015. 127 minutes.

Reviewed by Matt Zito

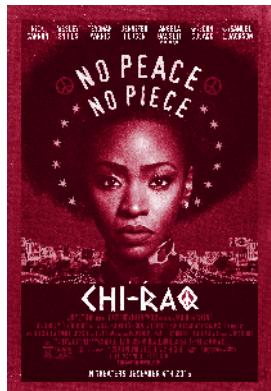
*Police sirens, Every Day
People dying, every day
Mamas crying, every day
father trying, every day
Tryna get my head straight, this the
city of Chi-Raq
Where you could get your bed made*

Nick Cannon's (Chi-Raq) verse opens up Chi-Raq karaoke style, spelling it out for those unfamiliar with the tragic drama set in Chicago's black and brown ghettos. Spike Lee's latest film caused early controversy due to its title: a portmanteau of Chicago and Iraq, serving as an endonym used by those living in what resembles a war zone.

Spike Lee makes a direct imposition of the 411 B.C. play "Lysistrada (Aristophanes)" upon Chicago: the gang factions are named Spartans and Trojans, and the Peloponnesian war is the ongoing tragedy of urban violence. These allusions to Greek history serve as a clever method for more "literate" viewers to be able to relate: they may never have experienced or may have become numb to media coverage of urban violence. The clash of settings creates a dense atmosphere: Dolemedes (Samuel L. Jackson) cannot narrate the grief of those who have lost their child, even if it is in iambic pentameter. The poetry of verse acts as a hook to enchant the audience, only to be broken by occasional prose.

Led by Lysistrada (Teyonah Parris), the women of Chicago go on strike to force an end to the war. Their strike is sexual in nature, and the film is loaded with tension as the beautiful cast and erotic cinematography overpower the sense of political urgency. Only passing jokes mention the possibility of non-binary sex, despite the large LGBTQ community on the South Side and prison culture making homosexuality a modern reality of gang culture. Lee goes overboard with the plot, and tries to imply that a revolutionary movement is afoot with the taking of an armory. The end of the strike ends up a televised "sex off" where the outcome of the strike is decided by the first to come.

The film becomes incredibly powerful in its serious moments. Irene (Jennifer Hudson) makes



Graphic: d19fuu4i30ql.cloudfront.net

it impossible not to weep when she loses her child to a stray bullet. Miss Helen (Angela Bassett) drops knowledge on gentrification and Malcolm X. Father Mike (John Cusak) orates on a level comparable to Father Pfleger, a real priest who has been in the streets and on the front lines for justice. A peace march features real families of those lost to violence. Finally, the end of the movie features a number of real demands fulfilled,

including a jobs program and a trauma center (currently, gunshot victims often die en route to hospitals far from the South Side).

Shots of the best graffiti murals and cityscapes, a cinematic treatment on current issues of racial justice, and an acknowledgement of state and racist violence are gems of the movie. Continual scenes on the El trains connecting the city and the revolutionary tone are an allusion to guerrilla scenes from Sam Greenlee's 1973 "The Spook Who Sat By The Door." Spike Lee makes a case for respecting women as a juxtaposition against the ultraviolence of men. Women take center stage as society's most important producer, becoming apparent that the withdraw of their labor (both domestic and workplace) would contribute to a disintegration of the social order.

Unfortunately, Spike Lee comes up short in his final call to wake up. The film ends up glorifying violence and objectifies its subjects. What appears to be a subversive film ends up a commodification of street life in Chicago, and does not materially assist in the struggles already underway for the demands that are featured on the screen. Local hip hop is almost nonexistent, despite generations of talented and conscious MCs like Psalm One, Akbar, Cap D, and Juice as well as youth programs like Kumbaa Lynx. This may be because artists had to pay a large fee in order to be reviewed for the soundtrack. As with most who score financial success deep in the hood, Spike Lee doesn't stick around to see what the people make of his wide-eyed proposals. The South Side doesn't need a wake-up call: the shots late at night keep us paranoid enough. Chi-Raq seems to get this irony: in Lysistrada's words "We need to organize!"

Wobbly Sing-Along

"Is Your Pay Too Low?"

By Jesse Napier (Whiskey Faithful)
x382063

In the same melody of the children's nursery rhyme "Do Your Ears Hang Low?"

Is Your Pay Too Low?

'Leaves you crying on the floor?
Are you grinding down your teeth
When rent comes knocking at your door?
Did the bank steal your home?
'Leave you sleeping on skid row?
Is Your Pay Too Low?

Well I've worked many jobs
But I've never seen the bread
Just slaving for the baker
When I'd rather see him dead
'Cause I'm the one to use the oven
But he's getting all the dough
Is Your Pay Too Low?

If you're reaching out for help
They will tell you you're a leech
Ain't it funny how they never
Wanna practice what they preach
'Cause if you look to the top
You'll see where all your money goes
Is Your Pay Too Low?

If you're gonna make a change
And you're gonna take your stand
Then the man on the top
Is going to fall to our demands
'Cause when you seize the garden
And take back what you grow
Then your pay ain't low



Whiskey Faithful

is a DIY, class-struggle
driven punk band.

Our songs are packed
with revolutionary messages about solidarity
and workers' control! We've shared the stage with
bands such as DOA, Mischief Brew, Days N
Daze, The World/Inferno Friendship Society, etc.

For more of Whiskey Faithful, you can find
us at Facebook.com/WhiskeyFaithful or Whiskey-
faithfulmusic.bandcamp.com

Come see us play, and you'll leave hating your
boss!

Songs of American labor protest

By Roger Karna

"I saw how the poor folks lived and then I saw how the rich folks lived, and the poor folks down and out and cold and hungry, and the rich ones out drinking good whiskey and celebrating and wasting handfuls of money..." - Woody Guthrie

"Woody is just Woody...He sings the songs of a people...and there is nothing sweet about the songs he sings. But there is something more important for those who will listen. There is the will of a people to endure and fight against oppression." - John Steinbeck on Woody Guthrie

America's rich heritage of protest music is almost as old as she is. It's one of the instruments for the underclasses to gain attention and unify themselves. The rich always hold not only the purse strings, but the legal system and the force to carry out their agenda, even to oppression. Miners, textile workers, migrant workers, auto and steel workers—all these and more have felt the lashes of injustice.

America in the early 1900s was a land of opportunity—for the wealthy. It was also the land of the very poor, without much opportunity. So-called "robber barons" like Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller and others, it was said, robbed from the poor and gave to the rich—themselves. Virtual wage slaves fattened their coffers. They worked for pennies an hour, or worse, for the weight and measure of what they could dig or pick, hoping the weigh scales were not rigged. The 8-hour day and the 40-hour week were almost unknown; health insurance, unemployment compensation and workers' compensation were non-existent. Under-aged children had to work. Unions were forcibly beaten down by company owners, their hired goons and strike-breakers. Most politicians supported the company owners. African-Americans had it even worse. The lynching of African-Americans in the South without any trial was legal well into the 1930s.

Songwriter Joe Hill came to America as an immigrant in the early 1900s, seeking a better life, so he joined the IWW. He and others like him traveled throughout the country by hopping onto freight trains, looking for work. The IWW told them that by banding together across occupational, sectional and racial lines they could fight the bosses and win.

But Hill was executed because of what many called a trumped-up murder charge and a travesty of justice. His legacy lives on in a rich collection of IWW protest songs. Many are still in the current edition of the IWW's "Little Red Songbook," subtitled "To Fan the Flames of Discontent." In



Lead Belly with a "windjammer" (diatonic accordion) circa 1942.

his most famous song, "The Preacher and the Slave," he mocks preachers who tell the workers to be satisfied with "pie in the sky when you die" rather than fight hard for their families now.

In another song, "Workers of the World, Awaken," he exhorts all workers to break their chains and arise, because exploiting parasites have absconded with the wealth they have made and which rightfully belongs to workingmen.

Before he died, Hill befriended fellow IWW agitator Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, whom the *Los Angeles Times* called one of the "She-Dogs of Anarchy." But Joe Hill composed "The Rebel Girl" to compliment her and women like her. They may not wear the finest clothes, he sang, but their hearts are true to the cause and the capitalists fear their tough, lady-like defiance.

Also around this time, an African-American sharecropper and songwriter for the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union named John Handcox wrote and sang a song, "There Are Mean Things Happening in This Land." He protested the callous actions of the planters and bosses who evicted, kicked and beat the union strikers. Handcox related, "As we were marching, we were asking, like somebody asked in the Bible, 'What you mean that you crush my people and grind the face of the poor?'

Mine workers in the early 1900s had particularly cruel conditions. Owners violently subdued strikes and unrest with deputies, hired detectives, and even state militia. Woody Guthrie's "The Ludlow Massacre" describes some of the culmi-

nating events of the bloody southern Colorado mine strike that went on during 1913-1914, how the company goons and militia forced the miners into tents, then shot at them with Gatling guns. They started a fire that killed women and children.

While the IWW was severely muzzled after World War I due to the "Red Scare" anti-Bolshevik activity, one of the most enduring songs (written by Ralph Chaplin) was "Solidarity Forever," promoting the vision of the One Big Union to fight the greed of the owners.

An anonymous coal miner of this era wrote "Miner's Flux." Their children lacked milk and were dying while the bosses, living high themselves, shot, starved, cheated, and jailed the workers. People sang of what they witnessed and this was how things were in America, not all that long ago.

Woody Guthrie, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, joined the hoboes and transients he sang about as he left home to ride the rails looking for work. He picked up singer and ex-Harvard student Pete Seeger along the way. Later on, back in New York City, Huddy Ledbetter (Lead Belly), African-American ex-convict from the Deep South, sang with them too.

But what was it like in the Dust Bowl Midwest of the 1930s that sent so many streaming west to California? How did it feel to see your farm, your life, literally blown away by violent wind and dust storms on the plains? John Steinbeck tells it in his aching novel "The Grapes of Wrath." Oklahoma "Okies" and migrant workers just like the fictional Tom Joad of "Grapes" swarmed to California hoping just to survive.

Gut-wrenching poverty can produce desperate acts. Guthrie's song "Tom Joad" summarizes Steinbeck's story of Tom and the Joad family as they head to California. He sings of how Tom kills a deputy sheriff who killed his friend. The friend had killed another deputy because he shot a woman. On the lam, Tom comes to say goodbye to his mother. He tells her that wherever people are fighting for their rights, he's going to be there. Steinbeck's story portrays situations and attitudes in our country's past, showing many things that are swept under the rug now.

Guthrie cried out his outrage at injustice in other songs: "Dead from the Dust" relates how miners and their family members died from constant inhalation of coal dust. "Pretty Boy Floyd" outlines how the famed outlaw of the Depression Era used some of his stolen bank money to help starving farmers and neighbors to

Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Joan Baez performing in Hamburg, Germany, in 1973.

keep from losing their homes. Guthrie maintains that while some rob with a "six-gun," others like bankers and lawyers do it with a pen. You'll never see an outlaw evict a family from their home, he bristles. Pete Seeger, fellow rail rider with Guthrie, used some of Woody's tunes and added his own. He sang "Talking Union" at union rallies, telling workers the bosses would never raise their pay voluntarily.

The huge African-American, Lead Belly, from deeply segregated Louisiana and carrying a large 12-string guitar, was well-acquainted with racism and oppression. He killed at least one man, claiming self-defense, and did several prison stints. Many of the "Who's Who" of the subsequent folk, rock and blues era paid tribute to his musical influence. He died in 1949. Lead Belly's most famous protest against the racial discrimination he experienced was "The Bourgeois Blues," written while he was in the North. He bitterly lamented that even in the nation's capital no one would sell him and his wife a home.

Later, protest singers of the 1960s and 1970s sought peace in Vietnam and racial justice. Folk singer Joan Baez said, "I went to jail for disturbing the peace; I was trying to disturb the war." Among Baez's melodies was a tribute in Spanish "Comandante Che Guevara" to the famous Latin American revolutionary. She also revived the ode "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night" arranged in 1936 by Alfred Hayes and Earl Robinson and sang it at Woodstock. Joe never died, they said. He's still alive in spirit everywhere workers are defending their rights. Phil Ochs, during his brief 1940-1976 life, composed his own ballad to Joe Hill. "A Toast to Those Who Are Gone" by Ochs remembered the anti-fascist American Abraham

Lincoln Brigade that fought in the 1930s Spanish Civil War, linking its members to the martyred union-organizing coal miners of Harlan County, Kentucky before them, and the murdered or jailed civil rights marchers of the 1960s in Alabama and Mississippi. His "Spanish Civil War Song" recalls how the fascist general Francisco Franco butchered a half-million people and eliminated democracy for four decades, yet received U.S. armaments for decades after World War II.

In "I Ain't Marchin' Anymore," Ochs laments how the old tell the young to go to war. In "Outside of a Small Circle of Friends" he fumes at how the rats sleep with the babies in the ghetto, so can you blame some folks for rioting?

One of the surprising heirs to folk-style protesting in recent years has been Bruce Springsteen. In 1995, Springsteen produced a haunting album called "The Ghost of Tom Joad." His ballads are in the Guthrie/Bob Dylan style and draw from the characters and ideas of Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath." They're set mostly in the Southwest United States, dealing with migrant workers, immigrants, border guards, drug smugglers and rail riders. These all, he sings, in their own way are looking for the better life.

Springsteen's title song ties the old Tom Joad-types with their newer counterparts. Oklahoma "Okies," Dust Bowlers and those like the Joad family were on the run, looking to stay alive, looking for desperately-needed hope and jobs, just like transients and underdogs are today. Men still travel the rails, live under bridges and live in cardboard boxes, searching for Tom Joad's ghost, he sings. And the new Tom, he says, still tells his mom he's going to be with those struggling to be free.



Cover of "The Rebel Girl" by Joe Hill, inspired by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, from 1915.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

A few years after "The Ghost of Tom Joad," Springsteen followed suit with a CD later re-done as "We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions." It features such Seeger-popularized classics of discontent as "John Henry," and "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" So there are still socially-conscious voices that join with the Joe Hills, Lead Bellies, and Woody Guthries of past years.

Yet popular singers today who perform the melodies of disaffection and dissent can make good money doing so. Old-time minstrels like Hill received little more than notoriety. But is the message, the cry for justice, equality and decency, any different? Some social issues and conditions may alter as times change. But by and large, people don't. Oppression, greed, hatred, and racism remain and must be continually fought against.

Perhaps the reason that protest music seems to be more subdued now is that the hard-won battles of our forebears have bought some gains. Franklin Roosevelt reformed capitalism just enough to prevent a revolution. Now, perhaps today's conservatives and capitalists are using the same idea (i.e. give the working class just enough to keep it quiet, pacified and thinking about other things besides equality and justice...and revolution).

The role protest singing has played in the past has been to point out injustice and stir up emotions to fuel the struggle for dignity, equality and the right to decent working conditions and wages. History helps us see that we're not alone in the struggle. And while the past is past, we can glean some truth and direction from it.

The Incomplete, True, Authentic and Wonderful History of May Day

Linebaugh, Peter. *The Incomplete, True, Authentic and Wonderful History of May Day*. *Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016. Paperback, \$15.95.*

Reviewed by Staughton Lynd

Peter Linebaugh is the poet laureate, Meistersinger, and troubador extraordinaire of May Day.

Here he gathers together presentations he has made on May Days going back to 1986. The book throbs with intimations of the ways in which the new world of which we all dream would be fundamentally different from things as they are.

Linebaugh's special gift as an historian has been to excavate apparent minutiae concerning a location or practice few have ever heard about, and lovingly explicate how even there, or perhaps especially there, the spirit of May Day expressed itself with particular clarity.

His first book, "The London Hanged," reports words spoken by men, women and children as they were being taken to the gallows in 18th century London. In another book, "The Magna Carta Manifesto," he demonstrates that alongside the familiar Magna Carta there came into being a less well-known Charter of the Forest. The Charter of the Forest sought to protect certain traditional rights enjoyed by the common people in using the original "commons." The primeval forest that covered medieval England like a huge protective blanket. These rights included such things as picking up dead wood lying on the ground to make cooking fires.

Let me describe the two passages in this book that caused me to feel most deeply engaged.

The first passage that blew me away (on page 109) was part of a May Day 2011 presentation. It concerns the Middlesex House of Detention, a "notorious prison" built in 1775. Linebaugh quotes a hostile critic (a typical Linebaugh touch) who said that at the prison the men took "great delight in sitting in a ring and telling their adventures and relating their dreams." Isn't this just what we tried to do in the Mississippi Freedom Schools in 1964, or what my wife and I now try to do every Thursday morning at the Trumbull Correctional Institution? Yes! Down with hierarchy! Let the first thing that happens in every class be to put the chairs in a circle!

The second passage I wish to single out, from the 2012 presentation (on page 120), concerns Albert Parsons and Howard Zinn. Parsons fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. Then he

moved to Chicago and became a printer, as well as a leading spokesperson, along with August Spies, for the surging anarcho-socialist movement in that city. After the bomb exploded in the Haymarket, Parsons fled to Milwaukee, shaved his moustache, changed his name, and could presumably have lived out his life in safety. Instead he went back to Chicago, walked into the courtroom where his comrades were on trial, and was hanged with them.

Howard Zinn was a bombardier in World War II, helping to devastate the working-class neighborhoods of German industrial cities and dropping napalm on the town of Royan in France. But he got to know a member of another flight crew who told him that it was an imperialist war, not a war for democracy. That man's plane was shot down soon after. When Zinn left military service at war's end he wrote "Never Again" on the folder containing his discharge papers, and went on to the career with which we are all familiar.

The point about both Parsons and Zinn, Peter Linebaugh writes, is that "each came to reject as false the virtues of valor and bravery when in service of war or slavery." That is why, he concludes, "we must never give up on those who disagree with us."

In Youngstown, Ohio, I have come to the same conclusion. When I visit the nearby supermax security prison, a uniformed correctional officer may come up and say, "Remember me? I was your client. When the mills closed I could no longer work in steel or as a truck driver. This was the only job I could find." I feel strongly that police officers, like prison guards, should not be collectively dismissed as "pigs."

The strongest evidence I know supporting what Linebaugh and I believe in this regard is from Leon Trotsky's "History of the Russian Revolution." In this text, Trotsky describes the general strike in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1917. Women, acting against the advice of male comrades, went out in the streets on International Women's Day demanding peace and bread. Especially moving is the description by Trotsky (who, remember, had been in charge of the Red Army during the civil war that followed the Bolshevik seizure of power) of elderly, unarmed women approaching the mounted Cossacks. The women pleaded, "You are no different from our sons and husbands at the front. We are all suffering. Don't ride us down." Refusing direct orders, the Cossacks did not charge. And the Tsar fell.

"Ideas can be beautiful too, and the ideas Peter Linebaugh provokes and maps are dazzling reminders of what we have been and who we could be."

REBECCA SOLNIT



The Incomplete, True, Authentic, and Wonderful History of May Day

★

PETER LINEBAUGH



Graphic: PM Press

Many May Days

I think the implicit challenge of this book is to nourish those occasions that bring resistance movements together to celebrate the Utopian dreams so often dismissed as impractical, and to assure one another of our continuing persistence in seeking their realization.

May 1 is a good time for such celebration because, as Linebaugh emphasizes, it allows us to recognize the green growth of new life along with the red blood of our martyrs and of comrades who have passed on. Remembrance of the Kent State massacres on May 4 might well be combined with May Day observances.

But we must allow our imaginations to range more broadly. A strong movement is likely to be a singing movement. One of the most characteristic elements of the Southern civil rights movement was that it held its meetings in churches and began and ended them with song.

Where did these songs come from and how were they massaged for a new purpose? In two ways.

First, gospel songs created over the generations acquired some new words. In "Go Tell It On The Mountain" the news that Jesus Christ was born was replaced by the demand to "Let My People Go."

In "Michael Row Your Boat To Shore" the other side of the river was secularized. The last line of the verse now said that Jordan's River might be chilly and wide, but we would "get our freedom on the other side."

Second, the "I" of the sin-burdened and heaven-seeking gospel lyrics was everywhere replaced with a "we." "We Shall Overcome" is the best-known example but there were many others. The song "I'm On My Way" declares at one point, "If you won't go, I'll go anyhow." But by the last verse we are singing together, "We're on our way and we won't turn back."

The songs of the labor movement are more problematic for me. There is a heavy overlay of the superficial and cheer-leading politics of the Popular Front. But strains of authenticity show through. "Solidarity Forever" is the tune of the old Civil War "Battle Hymn of the Republic" with new words by a Wobbly, Ralph Chaplin. Woody Guthrie surely speaks for the May Day tradition in declaring, "This Land Is My Land, This Land Is Your Land."

Who can forget moments when we stood in a

circle—there's that circle again—holding hands and singing "We are not afraid"? At the end of a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) meeting on the eve of Freedom Summer I took part in the following. All of us stood in a circle, holding hands, and humming "We Shall Overcome." SNCC chairperson John Lewis spoke over the humming. He told the story of the Freedom Rides and how when Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the sponsoring organization, wanted to call the rides off because of great violence in Alabama cities, African-American students in Nashville, Tenn. insisted on continuing the rides into Mississippi. Several of the Nashville group set off for Birmingham, Ala. by bus. Police chief Bull Connor was waiting for them at the bus station. They were taken away to jail (singing all the way). At midnight they were put in police cruisers, driven north, and dropped off in Klan country at the Alabama-Tennessee state line.

"We had no money," John said as we hummed. "We had no transportation. Our strategy was in disarray. But we knew one thing: we had to start back to Birmingham."

May Day and the IWW

May Days as narrated by Linebaugh have many variations but certain shared characteristics. They are intransigent toward the encircling capitalist world. But they are also communal. And they are fun!

Without authorization of any kind from Linebaugh I want to end with a contentious thought.

We need to recapture the magic of May Day in our organizational doings. The reason I am a fellow traveler of the IWW, not a member, is because at Wobbly gatherings I have often experienced abrasive personal relationships and soul-deadening parliamentary procedure.

No doubt I share responsibility for these dreary characteristics. But as gently as I know how, I want to ask: What can be done to extirpate them from our midst, forever and ever?

In the meantime, do read this little book, available from PM press in Oakland, and try to arrange a May Day celebration wherever you hang out. Invite all your friends but make it free and open to the public so that the group can grow.



In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold

May Day greetings from the
Vancouver Island GMB

TEACHERS, STUDENTS FIGHT AUSTERITY ACROSS THE U.S.

By John Kalwaic

Education struggles have been heating up in recent months. In many of these instances teachers and students joined together to fight cuts to their education or jobs. The following is a summary of just a few of these struggles in Boston, Chicago and Detroit.

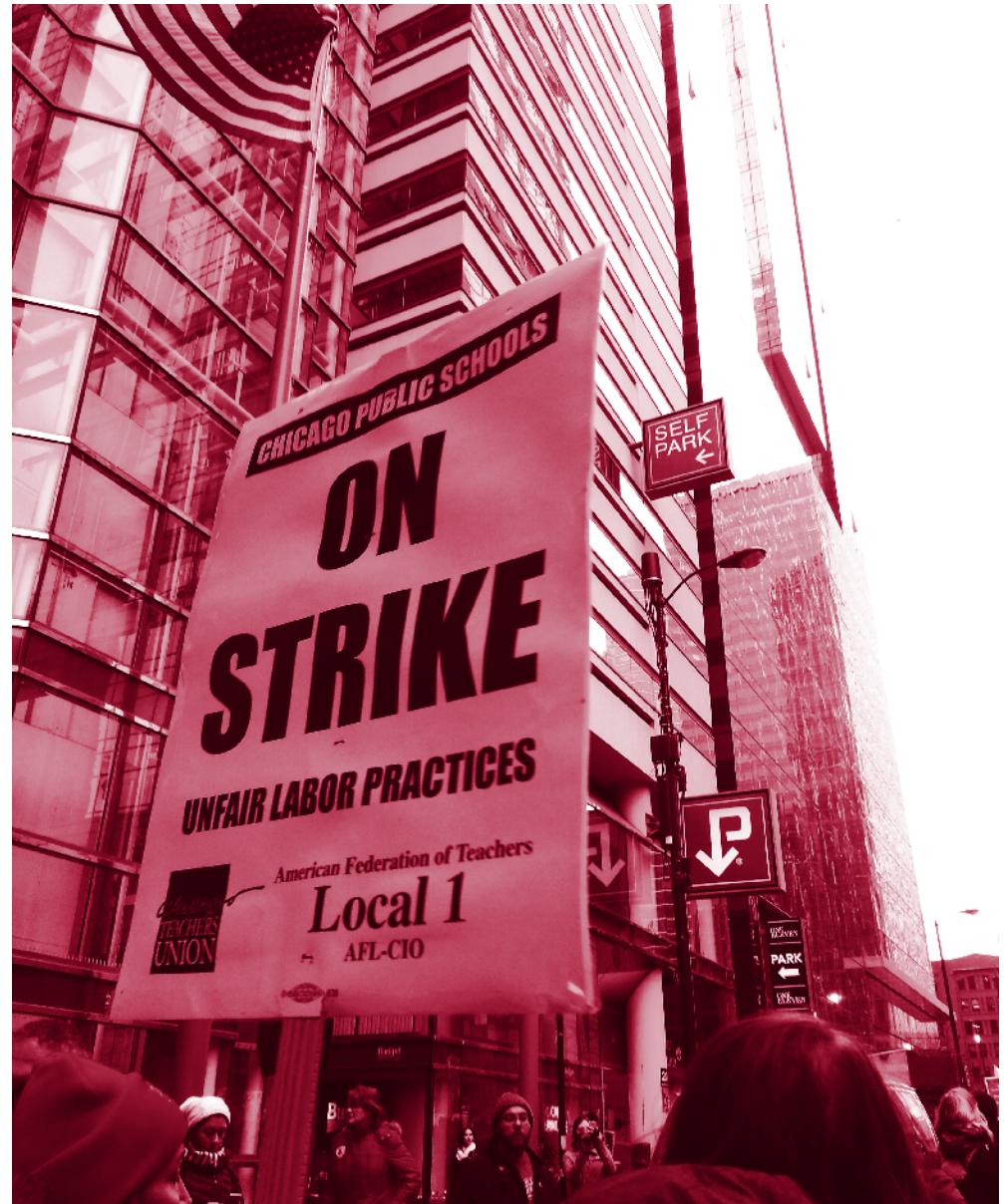
Chicago Students and Teachers Resist Austerity

Since 2012, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have gone through tough battles with Mayor Rahm Emanuel. In the fall of 2012, a major strike by CPS teachers occurred because of the mayor's lack of funding of the CPS, as well as poor pay for teachers.

In fall of 2015 and winter and spring of 2016, tensions mounted in Chicago with attacks on the CPS by the state and municipal government. This time both students and teachers in the CPS were trying to resist the growing tide of austerity in Chicago with talks of strike and student walkouts. The renewed teachers' labor struggle also came at the heels of anti-police brutality protest that occurred in response to the mayor's mishandling of the Laquan McDonald police shooting in 2014, and calls for Emanuel to resign. The budget cuts to the CPS have been ongoing even before the teachers' union began having major conflicts with the mayor again. These cuts have affected staff libraries and school cleanliness. Both student and teachers have been fighting the tide of cuts and austerity against the CPS.

On Dec. 11, 2015, high school students at DuSable Leadership Academy in the Bronzeville area of Chicago were slated to lose their library, and their librarian was going to be laid off. Around 200 students staged a read-in: students walked out of class and engaged in sit-in while reading books from the school library. A 17-year-old senior named Sabaria Dean was quoted in on <http://www.DNAInfo.com> as saying, "The librarian is like a mentor to me, a resource, she's dedicated her entire life to DuSable and the children in it. She deserves to be here." Dean went on to say, "We had all students sit in the hallway, silently, to get viral attention from the chief executive of all public schools" In a few weeks the students actually won their right to have a library and to keep their librarian.

On Dec. 26, 2015, parents and students took rubber gloves and spray bottles of vinegar and baking soda solution and went to Suder Montessori Elementary Magnet School in the Near West Side



Thousands of teachers, students, parents and other supports march through the downtown Loop of Chicago on April 1, 2016 during a citywide teacher strike, coordinated by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU).

area of Chicago in order to clean the dirty school. According to an article in "Daily Kos," parents and students were forced to clean the school because of cuts to the custodial staff. In the weeks prior to this protest the school had an e.Coli outbreak. The bathrooms had day-old urine on the floor, clogged and stinking toilets, as well as feces smeared on the walls. Many students had already missed school, getting sick from these conditions, including stomach bug, diarrhea and vomiting. The parents felt like they had no choice but to clean the bathrooms

themselves because so many of the custodial staff had been laid off from their jobs.

On Jan. 15, 2016, more than three dozen CPS high school students marched against cuts and layoffs. Adam Gottlieb, an activist with the Revolutionary Poets Brigade, was quoted by "CBS Chicago" as saying, "This is our government; we are the legislators. This is our classroom; we are the educators." Gottlieb helped organize the protesting high school students march to City Hall, CPS headquarters, Board of Education president Frank

Clark's home, and then to Benito Juarez Community Academy in Pilsen.

Another protest organizer Nidalis Burgos, a senior at Lincoln Park High School, said that many people have let the CPS down. Burgos was quoted by "CBS Chicago" as saying, "Everyone who's above who is making decisions without keeping the citizens in mind is at wrong," she said. "[Mayor] Rahm Emanuel, for instance, has been making decisions, wrong decisions, since the beginning by appointing members to the board who don't really care about us."

At the time of the protest the mayor and the CPS was already in negotiations with the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). On Feb. 2, the CTU rejected the contract offer by the CPS. In response, CPS CEO Forrest Claypool said that CPS would cut \$100 million from school budgets and force teachers to pay more pension costs in order to fill the deficit.

Karen Lewis, president of the CTU, was quoted on "WGN-TV" as saying, "Forcing someone to take a bad deal by bullying them, we're not going to be bullied."

In a statement published on the CTU website in February, Alison Eichhorn, a CTU member from the Lindblom Math & Science Academy, stated that CTU teachers have already shared many of the burdens of the cuts, including having to pay out of pocket for toilet paper and cleaning supplies, as well having to do cleaning due to the privatization of the janitorial services. Eichhorn also claimed that in the 2011-2012 school year, the CPS did not provide its contractually agreed upon raises, and that Emanuel lengthened the school year without giving adequate funding for it. She considered Claypool's demands for more austerity completely unreasonable.

On Feb. 4, CTU members as well as students and parents, came out to a march through Chicago's downtown Loop and blocked traffic to protest the CPS cuts and to support the teachers position. Approximately 16 teachers were arrested in the demonstration for "blocking traffic."

On Feb. 12, another student walkout occurred at Lincoln Park High School. Approximately 300 students skipped class in what they called "Fed Up Friday." They protested the CPS cuts, saying they were fed up with the lawmakers' actions. High school junior Adia Njie was quoted by "ABC 7 Chicago" as saying, "Today we call it 'Fed Up Friday' because we are fed up with the actions of the governor and the actions of CPS in general."

Finally, on April 1, students and teachers through Chicago planned a one-day mass walkout at all Chicago Public Schools. Thousands of teachers, students, parents and other supporters joined



photo: popularresistance.org

Thousands of students in Boston rally on March 7.

rallies during the walkout, culminating in a mass march through the Loop at the end of the day. According to "Yahoo News," "the walkout closed schools for nearly 400,000 students, who had the option of spending the day at 'contingency sites.' Chicago Public Schools opened at churches, libraries and school buildings."

According to an article on "Think Progress," the strike was called by the CTU as the union "is raising issues with what they're calling unfair labor practices on the part of Chicago Public Schools, such as changes in pension contributions and in deciding raises based on experience, called 'step and lane,' as well as unpaid furlough days."

With files from <http://wgntv.com>, <https://www.yahoo.com>, <http://www.dailykos.com>, <http://www.dnainfo.com>, <http://chicago.cbslocal.com>, <http://wgntv.com>, <http://abc7chicago.com>, and <http://thinkprogress.org>.

Boston High School Students Protest Cuts

On March 7, 2016, more than 3,600 students walked out of class in an act of civil disobedience. Some 1,000 students marched on Boston Common and the Massachusetts State House to confront politicians and chanted, "SOS, save our schools." The demonstration was organized by the students who often took to social media as a means of organizing the massive citywide walkout. There was some help from organizations such as the Boston Youth Organizing Project and the Boston Education Justice Alliance. Minor scuffles were reported with the police, but there were no reports of injuries or arrests. The students received support from their teachers and the surrounding community. Boston Mayor Marty Walsh announced on March 11 that many of the cuts would be rescinded; this was directly attributed to the protests.

With files from <http://www.wcvb.com>, <https://www.popularresistance.org> and <https://www.boston-globe.com>.

Unsanitary Conditions Cause Teacher Sickouts and Student Walkout In Detroit

The conditions in Detroit Public Schools (DPS) have worsened recently, not just due to a lack of funding—but the health and safety of the schools are at risk. This has prompted several mass sickouts of the teachers of DPS, as well as a student walkout in support of the teachers.

Even before that, the DPS had been having its problems. Michigan Governor Rick Snyder appointed "emergency managers" in 2011 in order to circumvent elected city governments in an effort to make cuts in spending to schools and other public services. These cuts have often resulted in public safety problems in the DPS as well as Flint's lead water poisoning crisis.

On Dec. 7, 2015, parents gathered to protest the fact that bilingual secretaries were slated to be laid off on Dec. 18. Many parents said that they and their students do not speak English and have no way to communicate with the school authorities. One parent, Maria Sanchez, was quoted in "FOX 2 Detroit" as saying that she wanted somebody who speaks Spanish at the schools because she does not speak any English.

In January 2016, a series of teacher sickouts occurred in the DPS. A sickout is when a good number of workers call in sick at the same time to affect the functionality of the workplace without officially going on strike. Teachers in many DPS schools found the conditions were deplorable; teachers showed this by taking cell phone shots of the inside of the school buildings and then made them public on the Internet. The pictures showed dirty bathrooms missing ceiling tiles, mushrooms growing out of the floor and broken parts of floors and staircases.

The first series of sickouts happened on Jan. 11-13, 2016. Sickouts occurred at Durfee, Keidan, Mason, Ronald Brown and Schulze. A sixth school, Bunche, was also closed due to a power outage. One anonymous teacher was quoted in "FOX 2 Detroit" as saying, "Teachers have not been silent about these issues. These are things that we've been saying for years and years. We've been identifying the problem; we've been trying to call attention to it. It has not had results. The laws are not in our favor. The emergency manager has not been receptive to us; the governor has not been receptive to us. We had to cause an interruption."

On Jan. 25, students at Communication Media Arts High School and Renaissance High School in Detroit staged a walkout to support their teachers and gain attention for their unsanitary schools. Though many students had been threatened with suspension if they took this action, the threats did not stop them.

With files from <http://www.fox2detroit.com>.

ORGANIZING CURRENTS

By x364631

organize:

1. *arrange into a structured whole; order.*
2. *make arrangements or preparations for (an event or activity); coordinate.*

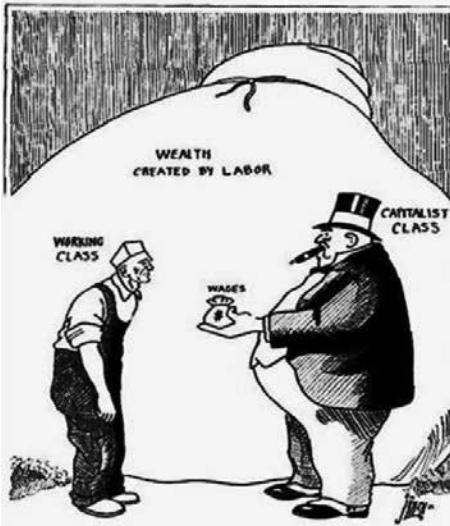
Over the years of attending IWW functions—branch meetings, IWW Conventions, Organizing Summits, Regional Assemblies, Organizer Trainings (OT 101s), Training For Trainers (T4Ts), campouts, and socials—conversations, if not the focus of the event, eventually turn to organizing. What has become clear from these dialogues is that within our union what is referred to as “organizing” has become a multifaceted concept, broader and much more complex than the basic old school Wobbly mantra of “organizing labor at the point of production.”

Most who have attended an OT 101 would agree that the basic definition of organizing is when two or more workers come together on the job to bring about positive change in the workplace without the need of the outside guiding hand of some overpaid business union agent, recognition by a government body or for that matter even the boss. Organizing, plain and simple, is workers standing up, banding together, and demanding better. This is the basis of most branch and organizing committees organizing the job.

Of late, a few committees have taken the more conservative, mainstream, and government-approved path to organizing; getting workers to sign cards, holding a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election, gaining recognition as the bargaining agent, and if the election is successful, obtaining a “holy” contract. Will an election win actually end up with a negotiated collective agreement between the boss and the IWW? Who knows?

The Seattle Solidarity Network (SeaSol) model is much touted and has grown in popularity with some IWW General Membership Branches (GMBs), and is increasingly being heard referred to as organizing. When addressing labor issues, the SeaSol model usually comes to the aid of a single-wronged worker. Those rallying to the cause have no connection to the worker who may not even have the support of other employees inside the shop. In the AEIOU (Agitate, Educate, Inoculate, Organize, Union!) sense this isn’t organizing. Rather, the workers are “hot individuals” who have been wronged by their boss, predominantly through wage theft, and have not had anyone to turn to for assistance. Once there has been a win, the fight moves on to the next individual and another shop. This method of one-off wins is very successful and exciting in individual labor skirmishes but has yet to show if it can be effective in battle, let alone in

Organize and Take the Big Bag!



Graphic: southernmaine.iww.org

winning the war. To date, there is little evidence that in any shops where SeaSol has won, or lost, have the workers later come together and organized to improve their working conditions or gained an increase in financial compensation.

While the SeaSol method is seen by some as organizing, the idea of workers organizing themselves into workers’ cooperatives or collectives is often rejected as non-revolutionary and not a valid organizing method. Apparently waiting until after the “revolution” to develop the skills needed to orient production and service towards the needs of labor while fostering worker participation is somehow imagined as contrary to building a new world from the shell of the old.

There are a few members of the IWW who see obtaining an entry-level job, demonstrating a lack of job aptitude, filing an unfair labor practice (ULP) charge when let go, and rallying support under the banner of “An injury to one is an injury to all” as organizing. Few campaigns of this type have the support of the workers in the shop nor end up with the shop being organized. In some circles the concept of union workers being the best workers appears to have fallen out of fashion in deference to the oft quoted “poor pay, poor work.”

Some of our membership see single-issue-based activism around non-workplace specific problems as organizing efforts. These activities can frequently stretch the capacity and divert a GMB’s energies from organizing the shop floor and the fight for ultimate worker control. Once an organized labor force has control of our industries, labor will wield the economic power necessary to address these concerns.

There is the use of the General Strike as a method to organize. The call for a General Strike

to support demands is bandied about with such regularity that it has lost its power to be such a dire threat as to strike fear in the hearts of the “captains of industry.” Organizing the General Strike has become a catch phrase, not the D-Day of Labour. Organizing for the General Strike where the mass of workers will down tools, stand up from their desks, come around to the front of the counter, cross their arms, and take economic power has been diminished to any action that is successful in getting any number to show up in support.

In addition to the various options to actually organizing workers on the job by the plethora of issues that affect the working class—and most everything affects the working class—there appears to have been a loss of understanding as to who exactly makes up the working class. Our class not only makes up both sides of every issue—social, environmental, economic, etc.—but also the uninterested and uncommitted. The basic premise of the IWW is to bring all workers together where they meet on the job to deal with common issues of labor regardless of left or right, or whether we personally like or dislike individuals. Increasingly on social media, members of our union express their disdain for other workers for such offences as ordering extra hot lattes, requesting service, purchasing a home, and for being a hipster. Yes, there are workers who identify with their masters; most, however, do not. Many work not just to put food on the table and to shelter from the storm, but also as it is in their nature and strive to do well. Deriding others of our class due to their not dressing or thinking in some arbitrarily-prescribed manner will certainly not enable us to build a broader movement of labor. An organizer’s first job should be to educate those who are not in the know. Preaching to the choir is easy; they already know the sermon.

To generalize, at the very least, short-term organizing involves workers on the job acting together to have more influence on their day-to-day lives at work. Seldom of late does the discussion advance to the taking over of the work place and moving onto the One Big Union of All Workers as the ultimate goal.

The concept of organizing has taken on many faces within the IWW: NLRB-approved recognition and workplace dispute resolution, issue-based activism and strike support, worker-owned and operated cooperatives, in addition to the revolutionary and historic road that the IWW has taken; through organizing workers on the shop floor to fight for what is righteous and not necessarily using safe, and conventionally approved methods. Which path will predominate in the coming years?

Workers Occupy Factory In Genoa, Italy

By John Kalwaic

Workers at an Ilva steel factory in Genoa, Italy, occupied their factory in opposition to insecurity at work and management corruption. On Jan. 25, 2016, the workers, who are affiliated with metal workers' union, Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici (FIOM), voted to occupy the factory. The workers stopped the machinery for the entire day and blocked traffic. The workers accused the government of trying to sell off the factory with no concern for their job security or the 2005 contract still in effect. The workers demanded to meet with the Minister for Economic Development to push the minister to make a commitment that the new company would respect the workers' agreement and job security.

The government shut down another Ilva plant in Taranto, Italy—the largest steel plant in Europe. The Taranto factory was causing environmental damage. According to the prosecutor of the Taranto case, pollution from that plant causes 1,600 deaths a year and several thousand illnesses. The plant also holds the record for being the most-deadly workplace in Europe, with the most recent death in November 2015. In 2007, at another steel factory in Turin, Italy, workers were killed in a fire that broke out in the ThyssenKrupp plant due to lack of safety measures. Six managers were convicted for the ThyssenKrupp fire and are awaiting sentencing. The Italian



Photo: libcom.org

Workers occupy Ilva steel plant in Genoa.

courts have reduced the sentences of the six convicted, which has enraged the families of the victims.

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Thousands of teachers, students, parents and other supports march through downtown Chicago on April 1, 2016, as part of a day-long citywide teacher strike. Front cover photo by Diane Krauthamer, *Industrial Worker*. Back cover photo courtesy of Chris Geovanis, Hammerhard Media Works, @heavyseas.